The Box Butte, Morrill, and Grant County Courts, in response to the public health emergency and Supreme Court directives implements the following procedures commencing Monday, March 23.

1. **Conference call number: 1-866-993-5554; participant code 364602.**
2. **COURTROOM PARTICIPANTS**:   Commencing Monday we will use best efforts to limit access to the courtroom to 10 individuals at any given time.
3. **COURTROOM RESTRICTIONS**:  access to the courtroom is limited to law enforcement, attorneys, defendants, civil litigants, witnesses, and minors and parents of minors involved in the litigation.  **PLEASE NOTE**: Representatives of SCIP and CASA may attend telephonically.
4. **CRIMINAL CASES – IN CUSTODY DEFENDANTS**:   defendants in custody will appear via video conference or telephonically from the jail.   This is done in an effort to limit contact and exposure to the detainees and the jail workers.  The only exception to this will be contested preliminary hearings, motions to suppress and sentencings.
	1. **Attorneys are directed to make arrangements to accommodate the needs of their clients prior to any hearings, and are required to confer with their clients either telephonically or at the jail prior to any hearings.**
	2. Counsel are directed to confer with detainees and attempt to obtain written waivers of arraignment and preliminary hearings.
5. **CRIMINAL OUT-OF-CUSTODY ARRAIGNMENTS/PRELIMINARY HEARINGS**:  counsel are directed to contact their clients and to arrange their appearance by telephonic conference.  Written waivers of arraignment and preliminary hearings will be accepted in all cases.
6. **HEARINGS**:  All hearings civil and criminal which can efficiently and effectively be done via telephone will be conducted in that manner**.  Specifically, all civil hearings that do not require evidence will be heard telephonically.** Counsel are responsible to arranging their client’s appearance by telephone.
7. **SELF-REPORTING OF ATTORNEYS**:  The Chief Justice’s administrative order of March 12, 2020 requires all attorneys to self-report when certain conditions are met.  All attorneys who are required to self-report and have not done so must send an email to all judges in the 12th judicial district by Monday, March 23.  A response will then be provided to the attorney within 24 hours to determine the best course of action based on the individual circumstances.
8. **REPORTING FOR CLIENTS**:  The Chief Justice’s March 12, 2020 order placed a requirement on attorneys to make the Court aware of any potential COVID-19 situations for clients by sending an email the presiding Judge to make a decision on how best to proceed.  This  includes witnesses who are required to travel from areas designated as high risk areas by Panhandle Public Health website, [http://www.pphd.org/](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pphd.org%2F&data=02%7C01%7Cedward.steenburg%40nebraska.gov%7Cf9f67012e7624300eaaa08d7ca7ab98e%7C043207dfe6894bf6902001038f11f0b1%7C0%7C0%7C637200500749558266&sdata=KQuH0Fo%2BAwXGPLbkXOpgTNnCRY3UU2vpjfMXOrwx5cA%3D&reserved=0)
9. **UNCONTESTED MATTERS** - Any matters that are not contested and can be done via stipulation and order are to be done in this manner, including requests to continue.
10. **TESTIMONY OF WITNESSES TELEPHONICALLY**:  The court recognizes the Nebraska statutes regarding testimony via telephone and/or videoconferencing.  However, the court directs that witness may appear and give testimony telephonically **unless an objection is filed 3 days prior to any hearing.  A failure to object will be deemed a waiver**.  Counsel are responsible for providing witnesses with the telephonic conference call number.  The only exceptions are for contested preliminary hearings or criminal trials, in which case the witness must appear.
11. **HHS and PROBATION**:  may appear and testify at all hearings telephonically, subject any objection being filed in paragraph 9.
12. **JURY TRIALS**: There shall be no jury trials held in March or April. Defendants shall be asked to waive their statutory and constitutional right to a speedy trial. In the event of a waiver, the jury trial will be continued to a future date. In the event that the right is not waived, a hearing shall be held to determine if the jury trial should be continued for good cause pursuant to Sec. 29-1207 (4)(f).
13. **E-Filing -** To the extent attorneys are not currently accessing online e-filing services we encourage you to do so to help reduce in-person contact for filings.  Judges can sign orders via a proposed order e-filed.
14. **COURTHOUSE CLOSING:  Many courthouses are allowing only limited access.  I anticipate that we will begin limiting the type of cases we hear through April.**